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SUBJECT: U.S.- CANADA BILATERAL AT REGIONAL COMMAND - SOUTH MEETING

REF: OTTAWA 626

Classified By: PolMinCouns Scott Bellard, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On the margins of the Regional Command-South meeting (reftel), Canadian representatives provided an overview of their security, reconstruction, and rule of law efforts in Kandahar Province. The Canadians emphasized the need for close U.S.-Canada cooperation in the transition to a greater U.S. presence in the province, and stressed the importance of Community Development Councils as a means for gaining local buy-in, approval, and security for development projects. Canada's Afghanistan Policy Director agreed to raise the issue of Forward Operating Base Wilson's recent security inspection failure with the field. As the U.S. increases its role and visibility in Kandahar, we will need to bear in mind perennial Canadian sensitivities about playing second fiddle to the U.S. End summary.

¶2. (U) SCA DAS Patrick Moon and U.S. delegates to the Regional Command - South (RC-S) officials meeting in Ottawa held bilateral discussions with their Canadian counterparts on April 29. The two sides reviewed NATO-ISAF operations in Kandahar, and exchanged views of reconstruction, development, and rule of law programs in the province.

NATO-ISAF Operations in Kandahar Province

¶3. (C) Department of National Defence (DND) Strategic Joint Staff Director for Current Operations Colonel Gerry Champagne briefed current and future Canadian Forces (CF) deployments to Kandahar. Through 2011, the CF will:

- focus on building the capacity of the Afghan National Army (ANA) to conduct combat operations and sustain a more secure environment in key districts;
- put Canada's "whole of government" to work delivering reconstruction, development, and governance; and,
- contribute to broader allied and partner regional security efforts in RC-S.

¶4. (C) Col. Champagne said there are currently about 2,500 CF in Joint Task Force Afghanistan (JTF-A). JTF-A's mechanized infantry battle group also includes artillery, armor, engineering, and mine clearing capabilities. The CF has deployed six ANA Operational Mentoring Liaison Teams (OMLTs) and six military police (MP)-led Police OMLTs (P-OMLTs), and also participates in and supports the 350-member Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team (K/PRT). Most JTF-A engagement is in the Afghan Development Zone (ADZ) which, Col. Champagne described as home to 75 percent of the

province's population, stretching from Maywand through Zhari, Arghandab, and Kandahar City to Shah Wali Kowt, and along Highway 1 past Kandahar Airfield to Spin Boldak.

¶15. (C) Col. Champagne explained that the CF is in the process of training five ANA battalions and a brigade headquarters, roughly 2,500 Afghan soldiers. This includes three infantry battalions, one combat support battalion, and one combat service support battalion. The CF has mentored over 90 Afghan National Police (ANP) officers at eight substations, and has assigned 10 soldiers (two MPs and eight infantry) each to six P-OMLTs where they live, deploy, and fight with their ANP counterparts.

¶16. (C) Canada is pleased, according to Col. Champagne, by the Afghans' "dramatic improvement" over the past year, to the point where ANA and ANP are capable of conducting combined operations. Although they are not yet fully trained or at full strength, he observed, Afghan National Security Forces have been in charge of security in Zhari district since February 2008, with ISAF forces in a critical support role.

Reconstruction, Development, Governance

¶17. (SBU) Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Afghanistan Task Force Director Kevin Rex told the U.S. delegation that his organization soon would move to make more of Canada's civilian effort in Kandahar Province support counterinsurgency operations there. Doing so will require

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the redirection of some resources from national programs to the province. These funds will help build the capacity of the ANP as well as corrections and justice officials in the province, and also strengthen Afghan institutional capacity to provide basic services.

¶18. (C) Rex added that counternarcotics programming will be "re-scoped and refined," as will Canadian engagement on the Afghan-Pakistan border (reftel). The focus on stabilization is a "huge change for an aid agency," Rex said, "but we are getting on with it." (Comment: CIDA has been harshly, and justifiably, criticized for its reluctance to abandon a rigid national capital-based capacity-building model of development and integrate into stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Kandahar. End comment.)

¶19. (C) Canada shares the U.S. view that countries should come to the Paris Support Conference ready to pledge, Rex said; Canada will highlight its \$100 million commitment for 2009 (reftel). Rex indicated that Canada's contributions would actually exceed \$100 million in 2009, as doing so would track with Canada's plus-ups to its initial annual commitments of \$100 million to \$270 million and \$349 million in 2007 and 2008, respectively.

¶110. (C) Rex said that Canada was proud of CIDA's success in marrying 544 block grants of \$40,000 each to many of Kandahar province's 540 Community Development Councils (CDCs). Pointing to these grants, Rex emphasized that CDCs' sense of project ownership was high, resulting in only one percent of projects being subject to attack during or after completion. Another advantage of using the CDCs he commented, is that they demonstrate the government's effectiveness to the population, thereby laying the foundation for the expansion of the ADZ even in areas where Taliban enjoy considerable influence and mobility. Rex wondered aloud whether Canada's new partner in RC-S, the U.S., "would have the patience" to work at the pace of the CDCs.

¶111. (C) Responding to INL/AP Director Tom Williams' query, Rex acknowledged that CDCs were not vetted, but noted that their willingness to work with the central government

suggested that they were not overly influenced by opposition militant forces like the Taliban. (Note: In a subsequent private aside, a Privy Council Office official assured some U.S. delegation members that Canada is reassessing the vetting issue in the context of the deepening U.S.-Canada partnership in COIN operations in RC-S. End note.)

Rule of Law

¶12. (C) Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) RC-S meeting host and Afghanistan Task Force Director General Kerry Buck began the session on Rule of Law by ticking through the immense, immediate challenges Canada and its partners face in this sector. Police are poorly trained, illiteracy among them is high, and officer retention is low where policing is most in demand. Through its K/PRT P-OMLTs, and in other ways, Canada is working to increase the capability, mobility, and survivability of the ANP, Buck said. To this end, she highlighted the need for a single national police training standard.

¶13. (C) Canada has also deployed 10 civilian police trainers/mentors to K/PRT, she said, and they are working alongside chiefs of police and their men at critically important police substations, to include remote districts such as Panjwai. The current P-OMLTs differ from the newer Focused District Development (FDD) model in that the P-OMLTs are staffed by military police and infantry, while the FDD model calls for civilian police mentors who, by definition, come with less capable, but critically important, force protection packages.

¶14. (C) Canada intends to do even more law enforcement training, Buck added, from working with corrections and National Directorate of Security (NDS) officers on questioning techniques, to deploying an additional six to 12 police mentors to the FDD program in June, to contributing \$50 million to the Law and Order Trust Fund. Meanwhile, Canada is keen to review the DART assessment on FDD rollout

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in Kandahar City as soon as it has been completed, Buck noted.

¶15. (C) INL/AP Director Williams briefed U.S. efforts to address the culture of impunity, which erodes support for the Afghan government, with rule of law programs, and encouraged that Canada and the U.S. deepen collaboration with a view towards avoiding duplication of effort. He commented that we have done considerable work on the "supply" side of justice, but now need to focus as well on the "demand" side - through activities such as support for legal aid, the bar association, and legal education for the Afghan public so that they are aware of their rights. The Canadians agreed on the need to increase collaboration, and noted that Canada saw promise in the "high degree of commonality" in existing U.S. and Canadian efforts.

FOB Wilson

¶16. (C) INL/AP's Williams raised Forward Operating Base (FOB) Wilson, noting that a report had suggested the FOB had failed a recent security inspection, which would complicate deployment of INL-funded civilian police mentors who are supporting FDD. Williams asked the Canadians to look into the matter. DFAIT Afghanistan Policy Director Richard Arbeiter explained that some of FOB Wilson's infrastructure was rudimentary (dining facilities in particular). He said that he was not aware of any security shortcomings, but agreed to raise the matter with the field.

Lessons Learned

¶17. (C) Arbeiter stressed the need to coordinate closely to ensure a smooth transition to joint U.S.-Canada engagement in the restive province. DG Buck suggested that the two sides should take on lessons learned from both U.S. counterinsurgency experiences in RC-E and Canada's four years of combat and PRT operations in restive Kandahar Province.

¶18. (C) Comment: As on many issues, Canadian officials worry about playing second fiddle to the U.S., a perennial sensitivity that the U.S. will have to keep in mind as we increase our own engagement in Kandahar alongside our well-meaning Canadian partners.

¶19. (U) DAS Moon has cleared this cable.

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